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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to determine if the average American junior college library annual report is used as an evaluation tool. If so, it should demonstrate how well library objectives are being met. A survey of a random sample of 260 junior college libraries collected information regarding annual reports, written statements of objectives, and evaluation consciousness. Some findings based on the 170 responses (65%) were: (1) 75% of the respondents prepare annual reports; (2) about one-half of the annual reports are prepared by libraries that have no written objectives; (3) more than one-half of all annual reports are prepared without reference to objectives; (4) collection and circulation data are the dominant topics in the annual reports; (5) one-half of the respondents use two or more methods for evaluation, and were therefore classified as "evaluation conscious"; and (6) high evaluation consciousness is associated with annual report preparation. It was concluded that to write more meaningful annual reports, librarians must search for clear and specific evaluation criteria and also present the accomplishment of their libraries' services in terms of predetermined, operationally defined objectives. (RN)

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THE ANNUAL REPORT AS A JUNIOR COLLEGE LIBRARY EVALUATION TOOL

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ABSTRACT

If evaluation of a library means the determination of the degree to which the library's objectives are fulfilled, then the annual report submitted by the average junior college librarian to his administrative superiors is not a good evaluation tool. Annual reports, it was found, often present only those library conditions that are easiest to measure and bear little relationship to objectives, expressed or implied. To write more meaningful annual reports librarians must (1) search for clear and specific evaluation criteria, and (2) present the accomplishment of their libraries' services in terms of predetermined, operationally defined objectives.

INTRODUCTION

The "Standards for Junior College Libraries" published in 1960 by the Association for College and Research Libraries contained a clause suggesting that an annual report to the administrative officers of the college would be useful to bring out "the accomplishments of library service".(1, p.201) The draft of the new "AAJC-ACRL Guidelines for Two-Year College Library Learning Resource Centers" carries this theme over, indicating that an annual report is "essential" to inform management of library activities. (2, p.269)

If, in the words of the "Standards", the annual report is to present "the accomplishments of library service" it is obviously necessary that the library have accomplished something during the reporting period. And surely, any accomplishment worth reporting must be related to the functions or objectives of the library. To extend this train of thought, one can say that anything that relates to the functions or objectives of the library is subject matter worth reporting to the administrative officers of the college.

Now, when one considers that the word "accomplish" has a broad range of meanings from "bring to full success" to "complete", "fulfill", or just " "perform", it is quite logical to re-define the annual report more precisely as "a document that reports on the extent to which the library fulfills its functions or objectives". It is in this sense that the annual report is seen here as an evaluation tool.

If the paucity of library literature on the topic is a valid indicator, however, very little is known about the annual report in the junior college library. In order to gain a clearer picture a national sample of 260 junior college libraries, randomly selected from those listed in American Junior Colleges, Seventh Edition, were surveyed. Of these, 53 were in large colleges (2000 FTE enrollment or more). The remaining 207 libraries were in small institutions (less than 2000 FTE enrollment). The survey was conducted by means of a checklist (Appendix A). Of the 260 institutions contacted, some 30 had either been closed or converted to four-year schools. The remaining 60 non-respondents did not answer follow-up notices and could not be reached before the deadline for this report. A total of 170 usable responses were received.

The data obtained from the returned checklists were used to answer the following questions:

1. How many junior college libraries prepare annual reports?
2. How many have a written statement of objectives?
3. What is the relationship between the annual report and the statement of objectives?
4. What is the composition of the annual reports?
5. How do junior college libraries rate on evaluation consciousness?
6. What is the relationship between this rating and annual report preparation?

Question 1

In answer to the first question, "How many junior college libraries prepare annual reports?", it was found that 129, or 75 per cent of the respondents, stated that they prepared annual reports. In the absence of norms it can be assumed that this is about as could be expected: three out of four libraries meet the requirements of the standards. Since the returns were incomplete it is dangerous to extend the findings from the sample to the entire population. In answering a survey inquiry such as this, a librarian who for one reason or another finds himself on the side of those who do not meet the standards in respect to the annual report, might hesitate to admit this fact. Rather than prevericate, he might conceivably procrastinate, and in the end simply fail to respond. It is probably safe to estimate that half of the non-responses are due to this cause. This information can be used to adjust the population estimate downward as follows:

Number of respondents	170	
Number of non-respondents	60	
Total number of active libraries in sample	230	
Actual "yes" answers	129	(75% of 170)
Potential "yes" answers among non-respondents	30	
	159	(69% of 230)

The size of the sample was chosen for a reliability of +5 per cent at the 95 per cent confidence level. In view of the limitations of the data, one might want to be pessimistic about the inferences and state with 95 per cent confidence that it seems that about two thirds of all American junior college libraries prepare annual reports as suggested in the "Standards".

Questions 2 and 3

In order to discuss the value of the annual report as a library evaluation tool, it will only be necessary to examine the objectives of the library and match them with corresponding statements in the annual report. For an annual report to be completely satisfactory as an evaluation tool, one would assume that it should answer fully whether the library has accomplished its objectives, item for item. For every specific library objective there should be a corresponding statement in the annual report. Schematically, this can be shown as in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Model of an Ideal Evaluative Annual Report

Objectives	Annual Report Statements
The library should. . .	The library . . .
. . . do X	. . . did X
. . . do Y	. . . do not do Y
. . . do Z	. ... did some Z

To carry this analysis through, a list of objectives must be found for each library studied. As a first step, an effort was made to determine the number of junior college libraries that have written statements of objectives. Of the 170 respondents, 77 said they had such statements. Sixty-five of these also said they prepared annual reports. These data say, on the face, that half of the annual reports are prepared by libraries that have no written objectives. This situation is visualized in Table 2.

TABLE 2

American Junior College Libraries Categorized

by Presence or Absence of

Annual Reports and Statements of Objectives

	Have Objectives	Do not have Objectives	Row Totals
Prepare annual reports	65	64	129
Do not prepare annual reports	12	29	41
Column totals	77	93	170

As a second step, the respondents were asked to submit copies of the statements of objectives they said they prepared. Of the 77, only 3 did submit a copy. This negligibly small number of actual statements submitted suggests very strongly that the reported figure of 77 is probably a good deal higher than reality warrants. If all vague statements of the kind generally found in college catalogs, such as "the library has X number of volumes to assist students in research and reference reading", were excluded it would probably be found that a good deal more than half of all annual reports are prepared without reference to clearly defined objectives. This is all the more surprising if one considers that in 1963 the ACRL Standards and Criteria Committee recommended that junior college libraries develop codes of library policies, among them "an outline of the functions [and] objectives of the library" (3, p.502), and that the "Guidelines" of 1971 continue in this vein by demanding for every library "a statement of defined...objectives" (2,p.267).

As a result of these findings, the attempt to itemize the objectives of the various libraries had to be abandoned.

Question 4

To obtain data concerning the composition of the annual report, it was necessary to solicit copies of the annual reports the respondents stated they prepared. Only 29 of the 129 positive respondents, or 22 per cent, actually sent copies. While this is a more encouraging yield than that for statements of objectives, it is still a meager return. The fourth question, therefore, can be answered only in a limited sense on the basis of the composition of the 29 reports received.

These reports were found to come in great variety of patterns and styles. Some were short, some lengthy; some were in narrative style, some consisted of tabular material, some combined both of these features; some presented data in large categories, others broke them down into minute detail. The only unifying feature that could be isolated was that they were all typewritten on 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper. To compare the 29 reports with each other, therefore, the line of typescript was taken as the countable unit. In this way it was possible to calculate the percentage of lines devoted to particular topics. In all, nine distinct evaluative topics were isolated. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Topics of Annual Reports, in Descending Order by Amount of Space Devoted to them by 29 American Junior College Libraries (in per cent of lines of typescript)

Topic	Median	Range
Collection data, such as size, growth, and composition of the book collection	16.0	100.0
Circulation data, such as home and room use, number of interlibrary loan transactions, opening hours	14.4	50.0

Non-evaluative data	12.0	50.0
Audio-visual data, such as media and equipment acquisition and usage	8.0[a]	55.0
Personnel data, such as staff size	3.2	23.4
Facilities data, such as floor and work space	2.4	35.0
Technical services data	2.0	19.8
Financial data	1.4	50.0
Reference service data, including instruction	b	50.0
User relations data, such as information on library committee	b	4.2

[a] about half of the statements identified as audio-visual data were concerned with acquisitions and usage of media and equipment.

[b] less than one.

Inspection of Table 3 suggests that in terms of percentage of space devoted to them, two topics contribute the greater part of the evaluative information to the average junior college library annual report: collection data and circulation data. To be on the safe side, significance of this observed imbalance among the topics was tested on the model of no difference in the median percentage of lines devoted to the ten different classes, it was hypothesized, was merely a chance deviation from a rectangular population. The rejection region was set at = 0.01. Using the chi square test, the value obtained was $X^2 = 54.4$. For nine degrees of freedom this value has a probability of occurence under the null hypothesis of no difference of p o.001. The null hypothesis was rejected, which strengthens the conclusion that collection and circulation data are indeed the dominant topics in the annual reports of American Junior college libraries.

In view of the high percentage of collection data, an attempt was made to segregate information on collection size and growth from information on

collection quality. If a report devoted at least one line of typescript to the question of collection composition, for example, this was counted as an instance of collection quality reporting. Table 4 shows the result of this segregation effort. Emphasis appears to be on quantitative collection measure.

TABLE 4
Collection Data Categorized by Aspects
(Number of Libraries Reporting)

Aspects	Number of Libraries Reporting Such Data
Collection size	21 of 29
Collection growth	22 of 29
Collection quality	8 of 29
Other aspects than those accounted for above	6 of 29

In another study, the annual reports of 13 California junior college libraries were analyzed by topics covered (4). The results of that analysis are given in Table 5 for comparison.

TABLE 5

Topics of Annual Reports Arranged in Descending Order by amount of space devoted to them by thirteen California junior college library annual reports (Per cent of sentences)

1.	Holdings and acquisitions	20
2.	Circulation and use	8
3.	Expenditures and budget	7
4.	Facilities and equipment	6
5.	Personnel	5
6.	Orientation	3

7.	Acquisition and cataloging processes	3
8.	Opening hours	1
9.	Interlibrary loans	a
10.	Photocopy services	a
11.	Reference services	a
12.	Book lists and similar user relations	a

[a] less than one.

In this study, audiovisual data were lumped together with book data. Otherwise the two tables (Tables 3 and 5) are quite comparable. On the strength of these two independent sets of observations there is good reason to believe, then, that collection size and circulation data are by far the most dominant topics in the Annual Reports of American junior college libraries; that personnel, facilities, technical processing, and fi nancial data are significantly less prominent; and that data concerning reference service and user relations are practically absent from such reports.

Questions 5 and 6

An answer to the fifth question, "How do junior college libraries rate on a scale of evaluation consciousness?", required the establishment of such a scale. It was reasonsed that in a library where the administration was conscious of the importance of evaluation, many methods would be employed in the course of a five year period to carry out such evaluation tasks. Likewise, a library that was totally unconcerned with evaluation would not carry out any evaluation studies during the same period. The number of different types of evaluation studies carried out in the most recent five year period, therefore, was adopted as a measure of a library's evaluation consciousness. The Checklist (Appendix A) presented five options of specific evaluation methods. Space was left for write ins. To

prevent contamination of the data by irrelevant information, separate answer blocks were provided for accreditation surveys and the accumulation of service statistics, two tasks presumably carried out by all libraries. The results of this rating process are given in Table 6.

TABLE 6

Number of American junior college libraries grouped by number of different evaluation methods used in the last five years.

Number of Methods	Number of Libraries	Cumulative Number
0	29	170
1	58	145
2	48	85
3	25	37
4	10	12
5	2	2

As Table 6 shows, half of the respondents used two or more methods. This group represents the "evaluation conscious" libraries. The rest are categorized as "not evaluation conscious". The complete checklist returns on evaluation methods are given in Appendix B.

The last question, concerning the relationship of evaluation consciousness rating to presence or absence of annual reports, had for its purpose to test the hypothesis that libraries that prepare annual reports are the same ones that rate high on evaluation consciousness. If this relationship could be shown to exist it would strengthen the view that the annual report is more than a presentation of library statistics but is intended as an evaluation instrument. The data are shown in Table 7.

TABLE 7

American junior college libraries distributed into groups by preparation or non-preparation of annual reports and by two levels of evaluation consciousness (Number of libraries)

	Evaluation Consciousness High	Low	Row Totals
Prepare annual reports	74	55	129
Do not Prepare annual reports	12	29	41
Column totals	86	84	170

Table 7 suggests that high evaluation consciousness is indeed associated with annual report preparation. To measure the extend of this association the contingency coefficient was calculated for the data of Table 7. This value came to C = 0.23; the value of chi square for these data was 9.3. For one degree of freedom this was found to be significant beyond the 0.01 level. While the association was not very strong, it seems that the assumption is still justified that libraries preparing annual reports do so with the intent of producing an evaluative report.

Conclusions

The data collected for this study suggest that annual reports are prepared in the majority of American junior college libraries are written by people that are highly conscious of the importance of library evaluation. These annual reports can therefore be regarded as instruments intended to present "the accomplishment of library service".

The conclusions concerning the performance of the average American junior college library annual report as an evaluation tool, however, are less positive. As was suggested above, evaluation of a library, if anything, must mean the determination of the degree to which the library's objectives are fulfilled. The study showed that considerably more than half of all annual reports are prepared in libraries that do not even have written statements of objectives. Surely, such annual reports cannot possibly have any relationship to well defined library objectives.

Many will argue that after a hundred years of successful practice, American librarians will surely know how to tell a good library from a bad one; that it is absurd to say that libraries have no objectives.

Can the annual report be said to measure "implied" objectives, then, less well defined and unwritten? If this were granted one should expect that for each "implied" objective there should be a section in the annual report corresponding in length and emphasis to the relative importance of the implied objective. The data of this study do not support this interpretation, either. For example, as the new "guidelines" specify, an important part of junior college library service is the assistance that students receive "in meeting their needs, articulated or unexpressed" (2, p. 277). There cannot be a junior college librarian alive today who would

not wholeheartedly subscribe to the view that reference service is of prime importance in the junior college library, and that guidance, orientation, and personalized library instruction are among the top objectives of the library. Also, facilities are certainly no minor matter in college libraries. The Dartmouth user study of a few years ago showed that 63 per cent of the people in the library at a given moment were there not because they needed to utilize the collection but because they needed a place to study (5, p.406). Robert Sommer's study of 1,563 college and junior college students showed that half had come to the library because it was a quiet place to study and was conveniently located; only 27 per cent said they had come to the library because of the availability of books (6, p.251). Kenneth Allen found that 61 per cent of the students questioned in his study had come to the library to use the facilities, not the collection (8, p.71). Yet, as the data in Table 3 have shown, the amount of space devoted to these topics in annual reports is almost insignificant when compared to the amount of space devoted to the collection and circulation data. One very plausible if not pleasing explanation for this unbalanced state of affairs is simply that the annual report, at this time, is not primarily a report on the fulfillment of library objectives, expressed or implied, but rather a presentation of those library conditions that are easiest to measure.

Considering the limitations of the sample of cases studied, one must be careful in drawing inferences. However, the results of this study support Burness' recent observation that library annual reports are often based on "superficial token objectives ... that do not actually guide or further actions" (7, p.63). It is the conclusion of this study that the average American junior college library annual report cannot be relied upon to demonstrate conclusively how well the objectives of the library are being met. It is not a true evaluation tool.

Recommendations

If further progress is to be made in the art of writing meaningful evaluative annual reports, more attention must be paid to the objectives and functions of the junior college library.

We librarians have here an opportunity to advance the understanding of the theoretical aspects of the profession by focusing attention on a fundamental problem of library science: the quest for clear, specific, operationally defined objectives, and for valid and reliable criteria or measures by which to evaluate progress.

References

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5. Dartmouth College study, as cited by Guy R. Lyle in ADMINISTRATION OF THE COLLEGE LIBRARY, 3rd ed., New York, Wilson, 1961.

6. Sommer, Robert, "Reading Areas in College Libraries", THE LIBRARY QUARTERLY vo. 38, no. 3, July 1968, p. 249-260.

7. Burness, Carl G., DEFINING LIBRARY OBJECTIVES, ERIC Report ED 045 116.

Appendix A

LIBRARY EVALUATION METHODS CHECKLIST

Please check the appropriate box if any of the evaluation methods listed below have been used in your library in the last five years:

(1) Accreditation survey ( )

(2) Comprehensive library survey conducted by outside agency other than accreditation team ( )

(3) Comprehensive library self survey ( )

(4) Library use study or user poll, not included in 1 through 3 above ( )

(5) Cost or cost-effectiveness study, not included in 1 through 4 above ( )

(6) Collection evaluation study (such as checking your holdings against a published list of recommended books) ( )

(7) Compilation of service records such as circulation, acquisition and processing statistics, not included in 1 through 6 above ( )

(8) Other methods not included in 1 through 7 above ( )

Also please indicate by a check in the appropriate box if ...

...you prepare an ANNUAL REPORT to the administrative officers of the college ( )

...there exists in your institution a written statement of LIBRARY OBJECTIVES ( )

...you have a written ACQUISITIONS POLICY ( )

Thank you for your time. Please return this checklist in the enclosed envelope to H. Hoffman, Catalog Librarian, Santa Ana College, Santa Ana, CA 92707.

Appendix B

The Library Evaluation Methods Checklist mailed to 260 junior college libraries listed five distinct options of evaluation methods a library may have used in the most recent five year period:

(2) Comprehensive library survey conducted by an outside agency

(3) Comprehensive library self survey

(4) Library use study or user poll

(5) Cost or cost-effectiveness study

(6) Collection evaluation study

When these methods were rank ordered by the number of libraries that reported having used them, the following table resulted.

Method	Number of Libraries	Per Cent of Respondents
Collection	115	79
Comprehensive self survey	65	43
Library use study	58	39
Comprehensive outside survey	15	10
Cost and cost-effectiveness study	12	9
Miscellaneous others	4	3

Note: Methods (1) Accreditation survey; and (7) Compilation of service records were included only to filter out those methods that every library could be expected to have been using. This would have distorted the data.